



# THE TRAUMA OF DISPLACED PEOPLE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF FORCED MIGRATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF REFUGEE NARRATIVES

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## ABSTRACT

A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. The analysis of refugee migration by Hannah Arendt, one of the most important political thinkers of the 20th century has become prominent again during the recent refugee crisis across the globe. In her seminal work "The Origins of Totalitarianism", she writes of an era of calamity that has produced "homelessness on an unprecedented scale, rootlessness to an unprecedented depth". According to her the most intimidating aspect of being a refugee is the "civil death" of the citizen. The topic, "The trauma of displaced people as a consequence of forced migration: A critical analysis of refugee literature" will focus on the trauma that is faced by the displaced people and their sense of loss of belonging as they start to settle in foreign and unknown lands. It will further examine refugee literature and narratives to obtain a more raw and unfiltered view of their lives through their own eyes based on the personal experiences and the trauma or the difficulties faced by the refugees in establishing their identity and protecting their culture and traditions.

**KEYWORDS:** Trauma, displacement, migration, refugees, belonging.

## INTRODUCTION

### Cultural studies

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. As the British-Somali poet Warsen Shire writes in her poem Home - "You have to understand /that no one puts their children in a boat /unless the water is safer than land". These lines provide perhaps the best summary of what drives refugees to risk their lives at sea. Refugee and forced migration studies has grown from being a concern of a relatively small number of scholars and policy researchers in the 1980s to a global field of interest with thousands of students studying displacement from an interdisciplinary perspective. Displacement forced migration and refugeeism had been recurrent themes of literature since antiquity. At a time when the global refugee crisis has reached a record high with more than 84 million people forcibly displaced around the world, it is more important than ever to understand the politics of 'Refugee Voices'.

Most of the refugee narratives are testimonial literature depicting traumatic events. There is much scope for further research in refugee literature from the perspectives of communities, artists, and academic texts as critical sites of knowledge which encompasses new dialogues and representations. The theoretical frameworks help to critically examine various refugee experiences through their narratives and their associated trauma. Displacement of people is no doubt one of the contemporary challenges the world is facing. There are a thousand multifarious experiences, and a thousand refugee figures whose meanings and identities are negotiated in the process of displacement in time and place. Recounting those experiences through their own narratives and representations is a need of the hour as it will lead to an accurate mapping of their trauma and resilience.

Refugee narratives are personal accounts and stories shared by individuals who have experienced forced displacement from their home countries due to various reasons. These narratives provide insight into the challenges, resilience, and aspirations of refugees, giving a human face to the global refugee crisis. Refugee narratives often highlight the journey of leaving their homes, the hardships faced during displacement, and search for the safety and a new place to call home. These narratives can shed light on the diverse experiences of refugees, as well as their courage, strength, and determination in the face of adversity.

Some common themes found in refugee narratives are Escape and survival, loss and trauma, hope and resilience, integration and identity, advocacy, and empowerment. Many refugees have experienced profound loss, including separation from the family members, the destruction of their homes and communities. These narratives often convey the emotional trauma and grief associated with these experiences. Despite the hardships they face, refugees often demonstrate remarkable resilience and a strong desire to rebuild their lives. Those narratives discuss the process of learning a new language, adapting to different cultural norms, and the importance of inclusivity. Trauma is a common and significant theme in refugee narratives, as many individuals who have experienced forced displacement have endured highly distressing events. These narratives often explore the psychological and emotional impact of trauma on refugees and the long-lasting effects it can have on their lives. Some key aspects related to trauma in refugee narratives: a) Pre-migration Trauma: Refugees may have experienced

traumatic events in their home countries that led to their displacement, such as armed conflict, persecution, or human rights abuses. These experiences can include witnessing violence, loss of loved ones, torture, sexual violence, or forced separation. Refugee narratives may delve into the lasting impact of these traumatic events on individuals' mental well-being and their motivation to seek safety and refuge. b) Loss and Displacement: Refugees often experience profound loss, including the loss of home, community, cultural identity, and social support systems. Forced separation from family members and the inability to return to their homeland contribute to feelings of grief and displacement. Narratives may explore the psychological impact of these losses, including feelings of isolation, longing, and a sense of uprootedness. c) Healing and Resilience: Despite the overwhelming trauma, many refugee narratives also highlight the resilience and strength of individuals in their journey towards healing. These stories may explore various coping mechanisms, support networks, and the process of rebuilding lives after displacement. Narratives that depict the process of seeking psychological support, finding a sense of community, and reclaiming personal agency can provide a message of hope and resilience.

"The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini is in Afghanistan, which tells the story of Amir, a young boy who becomes a refugee after the Soviet invasion of his country. The narrative explores themes of guilt, redemption, and the lasting effects of war and displacement on individuals and families. "The Kite Runner" offers a poignant portrayal of the Afghan refugee experience and the complexities of identity and loyalty.

"The Lost Boys of Sudan" is about stories of thousands of young boys who were displaced and became refugees during the Sudanese Civil War. Many of these boys travelled on foot for hundreds of miles, facing hunger, violence, and separation from their families. Their stories have been shared through various memoirs, documentaries, and personal accounts, highlighting the resilience and determination of these young refugees.

"I Am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban" by Malala Yousafzai is Malala's memoir which recounts her experience as a Pakistani girl living under Taliban rule and her advocacy for girls' education. After surviving an assassination attempt by the Taliban, Malala became an international symbol of courage and resilience. Her narrative sheds light on the challenges faced by individuals living in regions affected by extremist ideologies.

These are some of the famous refugee narratives that have resonated with audiences worldwide. Each narrative offers a unique perspective on the experiences of refugees and the human capacity for survival, resilience, and hope in the face of adversity.

## CONCLUSION

By critically analysing refugee narratives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities, challenges, and aspirations of refugees, as well as the broader social, political, and ethical dimensions surrounding their experiences. Such analysis can help foster more nuanced and informed discussions, challenge dominant narratives, and contribute to positive change for displaced communities.

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